

**Opening Statement to
The Senate Special Committee on Aging Forum**

***Keeping America's Seniors Moving:
Examining Ways to Improve Senior Transportation***

**Washington, DC
July 21, 2003**

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I am grateful to be here with you, and my colleagues, today to discuss a crucial issue for older people—one I think that has often been misconceived. I don't believe that the full transportation implications of the aging of America have received the attention they deserve.

Most older people today have complicated lifestyles based on the convenience and flexibility of the private car. This growing dependence on the car is likely to continue unabated over the coming decades—creating serious problems not only for older people themselves but for society at large. I urge you to challenge the easy assumptions which underline most policy debates about the mobility and access of older people. We must recognize the full implications of the growing “automobility” of the elderly—because whether or not they drive most elderly people make the majority of their trips in cars. This makes it difficult to develop mobility options for older people who want to, or must, stop driving while at the same time worsening major society problems from environmental pollution to consumption of non-renewable resources to traffic congestion.

I ask you to consider these facts:

- Within three decades 1 in 5 Americans will be over 65, 1 in 11 of those over 65 will be over 85—and the overwhelming majority will be drivers.
 - Today those over 65 account for over 14% of all drivers; in 2030 they will account for 25% of all drivers (those over 85 will account for more than 3% of all drivers.)
- Today 4 out of 5 older Americans live in low density places with few alternatives to the car; roughly 24% live in rural areas and 56% in the suburbs. Within metropolitan areas 3 out of 4 seniors live in the suburbs—where fewer than 43% live within ½ mile of any kind of scheduled public transit.

Rosenbloom, Opening Statement, cont'd

- These trends will only strengthen because of the aging-in-place phenomenon; roughly one-third of the current suburban population is 35-64 years old and will likely remain there as they age.
- While most seniors will not move when they retire, those who do will only strengthen the suburbanization of the elderly because they will move to naturally occurring or formal retirement communities at the edge of metropolitan communities or in rural areas
- As a result, older people take roughly 9 out of 10 trips in a car, as a driver or a passenger—and increasingly as the latter
 - Even those over 85 today take more than half their trips in a car, and they're driving that car more than half the time
 - Conversely the use of public transit has been dropping steadily among the elderly; in 2001 transit use was half the rate it was 1995. At 1.2% of total trips transit is a mode that has little meaning for most older people.
 - Although there is substantial discussion of special transit services and subsidized taxis, the use of these modes by older people fell so far between 1995 - 2001 that it can't be broken out in national data

I suggest that responses to these situations must be broad and far ranging, sometimes building on traditional solutions and sometimes abandoning those solutions and developing new and innovative approaches, always enhancing partnerships among various levels of government as well as the public and private sectors:

- **Improving and enhancing the highway infrastructure**

- increasing safe vehicle use
- creating better, safer, less polluting cars
- adopting older-driver friendly roadway and sign design standards

- **Improving and enhancing pedestrian systems and infrastructure**

- constructing pedestrian-friendly facilities
- improving intersections
- adopting appropriate traffic calming approaches
- strengthening enforcement of all regulations and maintenance of all facilities

Rosenbloom, Opening Statement, cont'd

- **Expanding and improving public transit service**

- improving conventional services
- providing new services targeted to older people
- enhancing system-wide safety and security
- offering better communication and information

- **Encouraging an active role for the private sector in transport delivery**

- regularizing informal transportation providers
- facilitating volunteer networks
- enhancing the role of the private for-profit sector
- supporting and encouraging non-profit providers
- “creating” transport entrepreneurs

- **Enhancing community design and development**

- mixing land uses
- promoting in-fill and neighborhood redevelopment
- encouraging pedestrian-friendly ambiance
- increasing appropriate affordable housing choices

In support of my statement I offer a draft of the policy brief I prepared for the Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy Reform Transportation. The Brookings Series is designed to frame the federal transportation policy debate around the most pressing challenges facing the nation’s cities, suburbs, and metropolitan areas and what that means for reauthorization and beyond.

I appreciate being invited here today. Thank you.